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DISCOVERY  
OF THE EXEGETICAL WORKS  
OF MŌŠĒ BAR KĒPHĀ

THE UNEARTHING OF VERY IMPORTANT SOURCES  
FOR THE EXEGESIS AND HISTORY OF THE NEW  
TESTAMENT TEXT IN THE VERSION OF  
THE VETUS SYRA

BY

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## PREFACE

Since I first made the exciting discovery that in the exegetical works of Mōšē bar Kēphā there has been hidden a very precious source for the history of the Old Syriac version of the Gospels—indeed, there are veins of gold in the strata of manuscript tradition and even nuggets—the loss of his exegetical works has given me no peace. This has prompted an extensive search.

What this report of a very long and time-consuming exploration presents are results which are far beyond expectation. In fact, the reward is very great. It is a matter for rejoicing that these precious literary records could be won back to scholarship. These are discoveries which not only enrich manuscript research in general and our knowledge of the history of Syriac literature, but which are very valuable for the study in the hermeneutic traditions of the Syrians, and particularly precious for the research on the history of the version of the *Vetus Syra*.

That it was possible to complete the remaining part of a long search for manuscript sources in the Orient, I owe to the National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. I express my profound gratitude for the assistance for the promotion of research in this neglected area.

I want to use this opportunity to thank my pupil Prof. Dr. W. Freitag for the care with which he has examined the English of my manuscript.

*Chicago*  
*January 1973*

ARTHUR VÖÖBUS





## INTRODUCTION

With Mōšē<sup>1</sup> bar Kēphā,<sup>2</sup> we have to do with an author<sup>3</sup> who, in the area of the hermeneutical literature, occupies a very important place. In the history of the development of West Syrian exegesis his eminent position is due to a number of factors.

First the section devoted to exegetical work in his literary creation. The importance of this work is shown via comments in the annalistic sources<sup>4</sup> and in the lists of his writings preserved in the biographical sketches. Some of these source were known previously<sup>5</sup>—one was made available long ago<sup>6</sup>—but we are now able to add a long list of newly discovered sources.<sup>7</sup> They all stress the strength of this genre in his literary creation.

<sup>1</sup> He was bishop of the combined diocese of Mosul, Bēt Kiyōnāyā and Bēt Rāmān, under the name of Severos.

<sup>2</sup> He died on the 12th of February in 903 A.D., “aged about ninety years, of which he had been bishop for forty.” Cf. BAR ‘EBRĀYĀ, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, III, ed. J. B. ABBELOOS et T. J. LAMY (Lovanii 1877), col. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. DUVAL, *La littérature syriaque* (Paris 1907), p. 319f.; A. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn 1922), p. 281f; J. B. CHABOT, *Littérature*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. MAI, *Codices arabicos* (Romae 1830) = *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* IV, 2, p. 520.

(Parisiis 1917) = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Scr. syri III, XV, p. 275. BAR ‘EBRĀYĀ, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, II, ed. ABBELOOS - LAMY, col. 215ff. Cf. J. S. ASSEMANI, *Bibliotheca orientalis* II (Romae 1721), p. 127ff.

<sup>5</sup> Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918, fol. 272b; Ms. Vat. syr. 37, fol. 189a; Ms. Br. Mus. Orient. 1017, fol. 205a; Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 21, 210, fol. 54a; Ms. Birm. Mingana Syr. 65, fol. 99b, and Ms. Ming. Syr. 112, fol. 55a.

<sup>6</sup> ASSEMANI, *Bibliotheca orientalis* II, p. 218f.

<sup>7</sup> Ms. Šarfeh 4/2, fol. 153a - 153b; Ms. Mardin Orth. 259/8, fol. 116a - 117a; Ms. Mardin Orth. 368, quire 22, fol. 9a - 9b; Ms. Harv. Har. 29, fol. 211b; Ms. Mār Behnām 9, fol. 1b; Ms. Za‘farān 2/17, fol. 211a - 211b; Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/2, fol. 208a - 209b; Ms. Mosul Orth. 187, fol. 33b - 34a; Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/12, fol. 208a - 209b; Ms. Mār Mattai 193, fol. 196a; Ms. Mardin Orth. E, nr. 1; Ms. Mardin Orth. A, nr. 16.



Furthermore, the amplitude of his contribution in this field is extraordinary. Mōšē is the earliest exegete to undertake such a large scale work on the terrain of exegesis. He is the earliest exegete whose creative power enabled him to develop his work in such a way that he could cover the Old as well as the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Mōšē amazed his contemporaries. One commentary after another came from his pen.

Still another aspect must be taken into account. His work must be regarded not only quantitatively but also qualitatively as eminent. Mōšē raised exegetical studies in his church to the heights.<sup>2</sup> Examination shows us that his exegetical creation rests on what was available in earlier traditions, traditions marked by the names of Ephrēm,<sup>3</sup> 'Ak-senāyā,<sup>4</sup> Ja'qōb of Serūg,<sup>5</sup> Daniel of Ṣalaḥ,<sup>6</sup> and particularly Ja'qōb of 'Urhāi.<sup>7</sup> Also on the Greek exegetical traditions which had been made available in translation. But Mōšē assimilated these materials in such a way that he secured a place for himself in the accomplishments of the West Syrian hermeneutic work.

Finally, the accomplishment of Mōšē is given point and substance when one keeps the historical perspective in view. This involves the evolution of the West Syrian exegetical traditions. In this development which started with the beginning of the sixth century and which drew from different sources, partly Greek, partly Syriac, partly from Alexandria, partly from Antiochia, and which received creative impulses from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. DUVAL, *La littérature syriaque*, p. 67; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 281; CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 95f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, *Literary-Critical and Historical Studies in Ephrēm the Syrian* (Stockholm 1958) = Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile X.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. DE HALLEUX, *Philoxène de Mabbog, sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain 1963) = Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis dissertationes ad gradum magistri . . . conscriptae. Series secunda III, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, *Handschriftliche Überlieferung der Mēmrē-Dichtung des Ja'qōb von Serūg. Band I, Sammlungen: die Handschriften; Band II, Sammlungen: der Bestand* (Louvain 1973) = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Subsidia XXXIX-XL. Vol. III is completed and will be published soon.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 179 f.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, "Ja'qōb von Edessa," in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (in preparation).

...tion of mose bar Kēphā to this development must be regarded as very significant. Without this work, the accomplishments of Dionysios bar Ṣalībī, whose contribution constitutes another important link<sup>3</sup> in this chain of development,<sup>4</sup> are not comprehensible.

In view of his prominent role the perdition of his exegetical heritage is a very great loss. That which has survived<sup>5</sup> and has been known<sup>6</sup> is slight indeed<sup>7</sup> and new knowledge<sup>8</sup> in this respect has not<sup>9</sup> until now been vouchsafed the world of scholarship.

Such a deplorable situation has prompted efforts to unearth from manuscript sources what still is extant. This is an undertaking which has been carried out on a larger scale, systematically and tirelessly. These endeavors were increasingly inspired, the deeper this search was extended into the Syrian Orient. Travelling from church to church, from monastery to monastery, and from village to village, the search gradually moved towards Ṭūr 'Abdīn, a region which has played an important role in the spiritual and intellectual life of Syrian Christianity. This is the region in which great literary treasures have been waiting for me.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament*, ed. by M. SPREGLING and W. C. GRAHAM, I (Chicago 1931) = Oriental Institute Publications XIII. *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament*, ed. by M. Sprengling and W. C. Graham, I (Chicago 1931), p. 620.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 2b ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. MAI, *Codices arabicos* (Romae 1830) = Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio IV, 2, p. 520.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, "Neue Funde für die handschriftliche Überlieferung der alttestamentlichen Kommentare des Dionysios bar Ṣalībī," in: *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* LXXXIV (1972), p. 246 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, "Discovery of New Exegetical Manuscript Sources Containing Commentaries of Dionysios bar Ṣalībī on Apostolos," in: *Abr-Nahrain* IX (1969), p. 169 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London 1894), p. 208.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. DUVAL, *La littérature syriaque*, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 281.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 95 f.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. BAUMSTARK, "Syrische Literatur," in: *Handbuch der Orientalistik* III, 2 (Leiden 1954), p. 194.

Furthermore, the amplitude of his contribution in this field is extraordinary. Mōšē is the earliest exegete to undertake such a large scale work on the terrain of exegesis. He is the earliest exegete whose creative the New Testament. Indeed, very important texts way that he could hands. Their value is very great. They are valuable not only for the history of exegesis in this Semitic idiom but also for the history of the New Testament text in its archaic stratum.

<sup>1</sup> A. VÖÖBUS, "New Manuscript Discoveries on the Old Testament Exegetical Work of Mōšē bar Kēphā," in: *Abr Nahrain* X (1970/1), p. 97 ff.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. DUVAL, *La littérature syriaque*, p. 67; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 281; CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 95f.



# I

## THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### 1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 101

Among the texts of Mōšē's exegetical heritage which we have unearthed is the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. What was previously known of the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew was derived from, and found in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17,274.<sup>1</sup> This was written in the eleventh or twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> However, only a section is still extant and that, in part, in fragments. In addition, that which emerges in an Arabic version of this work, prepared by 'Azīz Iṣṭifānī, preserved in Ms. Vat. arab. 453,<sup>3</sup> only covers<sup>4</sup> the last chapters<sup>5</sup> of the Gospel.<sup>6</sup>

Tireless searching<sup>7</sup> finally brought this work to light in Mardin, in Ṭūr 'Abdīn.<sup>8</sup> The codex has survived thanks to the Monastery of

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 50a ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum II* (London 1871), p. 620.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 2b ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. MAI, *Codices arabicos* (Romae 1830) = *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* IV, 2, p. 520.

<sup>5</sup> G. GRAF, "Der Matthäus-Kommentar des Moses bar Kepha in arabischer Übersetzung," in: *Biblica* XXI (1940), p. 283 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. G. GRAF, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur II* (Città del Vaticano 1947) = *Studi e Testi* CXXXIII, p. 231 f.

<sup>7</sup> About the beginnings of this long-range undertaking, see A. VÖÖBUS, *The Department of Theology at the University of Tartu: Its Life and Work, Martyrdom and Annihilation* (Stockholm 1963) = *Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile* XIV, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> About the efforts in the search for manuscripts in the region of Ṭūr 'Abdīn, see A. VÖÖBUS, *The Hexapla and the Syro-Hexapla: Very Important Discoveries for Septuagint Research* (Stockholm 1971) = *Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile* XXII, p. 67 ff.

Mār Ḥanānyā<sup>1</sup> or Deir Za'farān<sup>2</sup> which has resisted all the storms of destruction throughout the centuries, giving protection also to the rest of the manuscripts which had been collected there—containing priceless<sup>3</sup> and unique<sup>4</sup> documents which have not survived elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

The codex is Ms. Mardin Orth. 101.<sup>6</sup> In format the codex<sup>7</sup> is larger than ordinary manuscripts, written on Oriental paper, with the text written in two columns and with the ductus carefully executed<sup>8</sup> in an attractive Serṭā. Unfortunately, the colophon of the manuscript has not survived and we are deprived of exact information about the age of this literary monument. However, palaeographical indications allow us to place the script in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. The direct information<sup>9</sup> offered by the codex concerns only the later history of the codex. According to this, the codex was repaired by a monk Jōḥannān, a reader of the Monastery of the Mother of God of Netāphā,<sup>10</sup> north of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā, in the year 1910 A.D.

The manuscript has not escaped the vicissitudes of history. The beginning is lost and in the present form the codex starts with Matthew

<sup>1</sup> About the discovery of new important sources for the history of this famous monastery, see A. VööBUS, "Eine wichtige Urkunde über die Geschichte des Mār Ḥanānjā-Klosters: Die von Jōḥannān von Mardē gegebenen Klosterregel," in: *Oriens Christianus* LIII (1969), p. 246 ff.

<sup>2</sup> About the foundation and the history of this monastery, see A. VööBUS, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen: Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde. Band I: Westsyrische Originalurkunden*, 1A - 1B (Louvain 1970) = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Subsidia XXXV, XXXVIII, p. 104 ff.; 375 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. VööBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā or Deir Za'farān* = *Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile* XXX (in preparation).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, I-II, ed. by A. VööBUS = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Scr. syri (in press).

<sup>5</sup> A. VööBUS, *New Important Manuscript Discoveries for the History of Syriac Literature* = *Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile* XXVII (in press).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. VööBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A. VööBUS, "Découverte du commentaire de Mōšē bar Kēphā sur l'Évangile de Matthieu," in: *Revue biblique* LXXX (1973), p. 359 ff.

<sup>8</sup> The manuscript has 33-37 lines per folio page.

<sup>9</sup> Fol. 90a.

<sup>10</sup> About this monastery near Mardin, see A. VööBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East* II (Louvain 1960) = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Subsidia XVII, p. 229.



XIII,57. Also the end is lost after Matthew XXVI,10. There is also a gap<sup>1</sup> in the text and some places the archetype must have had some minor lacunae or illegible places. This is indicated by blank spots left in the manuscript.

## 2. ITS EVIDENCE

There are several reasons for focussing attention upon this manuscript. A document has come into our possession which can enrich our knowledge in several directions.

First of all the manuscript constitutes a very valuable supplement to our knowledge regarding the text of the commentary. The text we had no longer stands alone. There is great value in the fact that we now possess another witness to the text revealing the channels through which the transmission has passed. Secondly, some gaps in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17,274 can be filled out. Readings which have suffered in the London codex can be elucidated.

Still another reason for special interest can be put forward. For more than two decades, in connection with the discovery of new and important sources which have opened up entirely new vistas regarding the further history of the Old Syriac text traditions,<sup>2</sup> I have called attention to the fact that Mōšē bar Kēphā has employed<sup>3</sup> a type of Gospel text which reveals significant relations to the Vetus Syra.<sup>4</sup> Since Mōšē quotes richly, much more richly than Dionysios bar Ṣalībī in his commentaries, and usually covers the whole text, bringing lemmata or groups of verses in an orderly way, he can offer us a real service in our research on the biblical text.

In fact, the observations which have been made about the textual historical value of the Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17,274 find not only confirma-

<sup>1</sup> Matth. XIX, 29 - XX, 28.

<sup>2</sup> A. VÖÖBUS, *Neue Ergebnisse in der Erforschung der Geschichte der Evangelientexte im Syrischen* (Pinneberg 1948) = Contributions of the Baltic University LXV, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> A. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* (Louvain 1951) = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Subsidia III, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> A. VÖÖBUS, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies* (Stockholm 1954) = Papers of the Estonian Teological Society in Exile VI, p. 85, 261.

tion but unexpected enrichment in the new manuscript. It unfolds very instructive data. The lemmata reveal more Old Syriac elements despite the fact that many Old Syriac readings which appear in the codex in London have been revised here. What we see on the basis of the new evidence is a new process of revision of the lemmata. Thus both copies have undergone a revision and adaptation of the text which Mōšē used originally.

## II

### THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

#### 1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 102

The situation in regard to the preservation of the commentary on the Gospel of Luke was much worse than in the case of that on Matthew. What has survived is only a very small fragment,<sup>1</sup> just a tiny scrap.<sup>2</sup> This is all<sup>3</sup> that has emerged!<sup>4</sup>

More than two decades ago I lamented the loss of the commentary of Mōšē bar Kēphā on the Gospel of Luke<sup>5</sup>—in connection with discoveries on the Old Syriac version—as another possible source for this archaic text type. Now I am in the lucky situation of being able to report that my ceaseless quest has been rewarded with the discovery of this lost work of Mōšē.

The hiding place for this codex which is a unique record in every way is the collection of manuscripts in the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā. It is Ms. Mardin Orth. 102.<sup>6</sup> The first folio containing the title of this work has disappeared. However, the last folio has been preserved and it tells us of this work. The text reads as follows: "The commentary on the blessed Luke, prepared by the holy Mōšē, bishop, called bar Kēphā." Thus the last page has salvaged direct information about the authorship of this work.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17, 274, fol. 152a.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 620.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 281.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 95 f.; BAUMSTARK, "Syrische Literatur," p. 194 f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā*.



The palaeographical features are very remarkable. In the format the codex<sup>1</sup> is higher than ordinary manuscripts but shorter in its width, so that it already catches attention by its proportions. It is written on thin Oriental paper. The text is executed very carefully,<sup>2</sup> written in black ink which looks now somewhat yellowish, but all the lemmata are in red.

It is very fortunate that at this time we are allowed to learn more about the preparation of the text of this manuscript in a way which is very rare. There is a note<sup>3</sup> which in a very interesting way shows that the codex was prepared with special care and circumspection. Three manuscripts were used for the preparation of the present volume. The scribe tells us proudly how seriously he has taken the dominical commandment about the validity of a testimony.<sup>4</sup>

He has told us more about the genesis of this literary monument. It is a matter of deep regret that the last lines on the lower margin of the last folio page which contained information about the date of the manuscript, have suffered so heavily that they have become illegible. We can decipher no more than this, that a certain ʾĪšōʿ wrote the manuscript. He was a deacon and a teacher established in the church of the Ḥaṣṣāṣānāyē<sup>5</sup> in Mosul, namely of the people from the town of Ḥaṣṣāṣah<sup>6</sup> in the region of Tagrīt<sup>7</sup> who had their own church in Mosul. The rest is so worn out that it cannot be deciphered. On palaeographical grounds, however, this type of Serṭā script seems to belong to the eleventh or twelfth century.

The codex has not been spared injury. The first folio is lost, together with the title,<sup>8</sup> the prescript and the introduction to the commentary. However, the first folio preserved in the present manuscript brings the text and commentary of Luke I, 1 which means that the commentary

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, "Die Entdeckung des Lukaskommentars von Mōšē bar Kēphā," in: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* LXII (1971), p. 132 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The manuscript has regularly 34 lines per folio page, only exceptionally 35 lines.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 68a.

<sup>4</sup> Matth. XVIII, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. BAR ʿEBRĀYĀ, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* II, col. 573, 7; 579, 8.

<sup>6</sup> About this town, see S. E. ASSEMANI et J. S. ASSEMANI, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae codicum manuscriptorum catalogus* II (Romae 1758), p. 229, 234, 241.

<sup>7</sup> YAQUT, *Muʿjam al-buldān* IV, ed. F. WÜSTENFELD (Leipzig 1869), p. 457.

<sup>8</sup> The title is not repeated later, as this is often the case in manuscripts.

itself despite the above-mentioned loss has not been affected. Fortunately, the codex has not suffered much internally—here and there some folio pages have fallen out, but the codex has partly been damaged by water. There are places near the margin where the text has been diluted by water with a consequent loss of textual clarity and even legibility.

## 2. ITS EVIDENCE

What this document tells us about the exegetical treatment of the Third Gospel is entirely a revelation to us. As has already been said, this discovery is a unicum.<sup>1</sup> Besides this it contains valuable data derived from ancient hermeneutical traditions, able to illumine difficult texts which have appeared as enigmatic. The interpretation given here on such difficult episodes is indeed very welcome.<sup>2</sup>

Another aspect enhances the values of the newly found unicum. As we have previously noted in connection with the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew,<sup>3</sup> so here—the contributions of Mōšē bar Kēphā to the exegetical literature on the gospels are very valuable from the angle of the history of the Vetus Syra. This commentary for the first time acquaints with the text of the Third Gospel as it was used by Mōšē and it is highly interesting to examine the new textual material emerging from a stream which textual studies must estimate as very important. Indeed, that which examination reveals is highly exciting. There are sections in the textual part in which every verse contains elements of the Old Syriac version. Moreover, elements emerge which occur in no Old Syriac manuscript which we have but which appear in other sources closer to the powerful influence of the version of the Diatessaron itself.<sup>4</sup> There are segments in the text in which every verse contains several archaic elements.<sup>5</sup> All in all, we have a source before us which is of great

<sup>1</sup> Its edition is in preparation.

<sup>2</sup> See A. VÖÖBUS, *Exegetical Studies*, in: A. VÖÖBUS and H. G. DAVIS, *The Gospels in Study and Preaching* (Philadelphia 1966), p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> See page 17 f.

<sup>4</sup> About these phenomena, see A. VÖÖBUS, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac II* = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (in preparation).

<sup>5</sup> For example Luke XVI, 2-9.



import. It must be added that textual studies are facilitated by the fact that Mōšē bar Kēphā handles the biblical text very carefully in form of the lemmata and portions of the text *in extenso*, a procedure quite different in comparison with the commentaries of Dionysios bar Ṣalībī.<sup>1</sup>

It is with deep satisfaction that we can report that this important exegetical work of Mōšē bar Kēphā has been resuscitated from its grave.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Dionysii bar Ṣalibi commentarii in evangelia*, ed. I. SEDLAČEK et J. B. CHABOT (Lovanii 1915) = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Scr. syri II, 98.

### III

## THE COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

### 1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 121

The codex which brings us the text of the commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy has found its hiding place in the collection of manuscripts of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā or Deir Za‘farān.<sup>1</sup> At present it is kept in the collection of manuscripts in Mardin.<sup>2</sup> Ms. Mardin Orth. 121<sup>3</sup> is a precious record which contains important surprises for us.

The manuscript represents a volume of rather small size, bound in black leather. It is written on Oriental paper. The arrangement of the text has been planned circumspectly and executed very carefully and regularly.<sup>4</sup> Every folio page has twenty to twenty-one lines. The hand of the copist also reveals care. The Serṭā type is neat and attractive. The hand of the scribe also causes attention by the forceful embellishments which the scribe liked whenever good opportunity presented itself. The titles as well as the text of the Epistle are written in red ink.

The codex has double pagination. The folios have been numbered but full pagination was added later,<sup>5</sup> obviously by a recent hand.

The manuscript is dated. The codex was completed in the year 1899 A. Gr., i.e., in the year 1588 A.D. The colophon<sup>6</sup> which has been attached to the end of the commentary on the Second Epistle to Timothy<sup>7</sup> gives us full information.

<sup>1</sup> See page 16.

<sup>2</sup> In the archbishopric of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Mardin.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā*.

<sup>4</sup> The manuscript has 20 - 21 lines per folio page.

<sup>5</sup> By a recent hand.

<sup>6</sup> Fol. 139b.

<sup>7</sup> See page 25.

## 2. ITS EVIDENCE

The manuscript represents a volume which comprises a very interesting selection of the commentaries by Mōšē bar Kēphā, drawn from the liturgical as well as the exegetical genre. First comes his commentary<sup>1</sup> on the liturgy of baptism<sup>2</sup> and then that on the liturgy<sup>3</sup> of the eucharist.<sup>4</sup> After the execution of these two commentaries, the text of the first exegetical commentary is introduced<sup>5</sup> in the following way: "Again the commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, the first one."<sup>6</sup> The text of the commentary continues to the end of the *kūrrāsā* 11. This is marked by a conclusion formulated in the following words: "Here ends the commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy, written from Laodicea in Pisidia."<sup>7</sup> Thus there stands before us the commentary of Mōšē bar Kēphā on the first letter of the pastoral epistles.

This commentary has survived in two other manuscripts which have been known. One is Ms. Oxford Marsh 86,<sup>8</sup> an ancient codex<sup>9</sup> which has preserved the commentary.<sup>10</sup> The other is Ms. Oxf. Bodl. Orient. 703,<sup>11</sup> a codex of the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 1b - 11a.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. VÖÖBUS, "Discovery of New Important Manuscript Sources for the Genre of Liturgical Commentaries by Mōšē bar Kēphā," in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* XL (in preparation).

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 11a - 47b.

<sup>4</sup> See note 2.

<sup>5</sup> With the beginning of *kūrrāsā* 6.

<sup>6</sup> Fol. 48a.

<sup>7</sup> Fol. 105b.

<sup>8</sup> R. P. SMITH, *Catalogus codicum syriacorum* (Oxonii 1864), col. 418 ff.

<sup>9</sup> "Vetustus", *ibid.*, col. 418.

<sup>10</sup> Fol. 65 ff.

<sup>11</sup> SMITH, *Catalogus codicum syriacorum*, col. 400 ff.

<sup>12</sup> P. 52 ff.

## IV

### THE COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

#### 1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 121

The measure of surprises on the commentaries of the pastoral epistles is not yet full. Also the text of the commentary of Mōšē bar Kēphā on the Second Epistle to Timothy comes to us through the same discovery, namely Ms. Mardin Orth. 121,<sup>1</sup> introduced in the previous section.

Codicographical and palaeographical data of the manuscript have already been discussed in connection with the commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy.<sup>2</sup>

In the total collection of texts this commentary constitutes the conclusion. Accordingly the colophon<sup>3</sup> is attached to this section. It is quite full of information. Here the scribe first enumerates the works which he had chosen for the volume. Then he gives information about the completion of the manuscript. The codex was completed on the eighteenth of *Kanūn ḥrāyā* in the year 1899 A. Gr., i.e., on the eighteenth of January 1588 A.D. Then he mentions the names of the contemporary prelates of his church. Finally he tells us something about himself. We learn that the scribe was of the country of Gargar<sup>4</sup> and that he was a monk and presbyter.

#### 2. ITS EVIDENCE

Immediately after the completion of the first commentary this new text is introduced in the following words: "Again the commentary on

<sup>1</sup> Cf. VööBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā*.

<sup>2</sup> See page 23.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 139b.

<sup>4</sup> In the town of Qaṣṭrā



the Second Epistle to Timothy.”<sup>1</sup> This commentary begins at the end of the *kūrrāsā* 11<sup>2</sup> and continues to the third folio of the *kūrrāsā* 15 where the conclusion is marked by the following subscription: “Here ends the commentary on the Second Epistle to Timothy written from Rome.”<sup>3</sup>

It must be brought out again that the way Mōšē handles the biblical text commands special recognition. Also in the commentaries on both epistles to Timothy, Mōšē follows his practice faithfully. He does not cut the text into smaller pieces but introduces it in solid sections. This is particularly advantageous for textual studies.

As we have already seen, this commentary has survived in two other manuscripts. One is Ms. Oxf. Marsh 86,<sup>4</sup> an ancient codex,<sup>5</sup> the other is Ms. Oxf. Bodl. Orient. 703<sup>6</sup> which stems from the seventeenth century.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 105b.

<sup>2</sup> Fol. 105b.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 139a.

<sup>4</sup> SMITH, *Catalogus codicum syriacorum*, col. 418 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Fol. 69 ff.

<sup>6</sup> SMITH, *Catalogus codicum syriacorum*, col. 400 ff.

<sup>7</sup> P. 55 ff.



## V

### SEGMENTS OF COMMENTARIES ALREADY EXTANT

Although we have now covered the account of the discovered manuscripts, we can still increase our knowledge in this domain. There is a pathway which leads to still some other sources important for our research. This time they consist of excerpts, segments, and sections of commentaries taken from manuscripts which themselves have disappeared. And this avenue also must be pursued because it is through these sections that we gain a glimpse of other strata in the transmission of the text. This is a pathway which is open to us via the collections of the *tūrgāmē*, *mēmre*, *‘elātā* and the *pūšāqē*. In the history of the literary tradition such collections reach back to the tenth century. The oldest is Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17, 188,<sup>1</sup> a vellum codex of the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>2</sup> In these collections which vary in their selection of materials only such collections can come into account for our purpose which also include the genre known as *pūšāqā*, a genre which belongs to the domain of biblical exegesis.

#### 1. THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

In the first place, the segment which covers Matthew VIII, 22 must be introduced. The earliest source for this segment appears in Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918<sup>3</sup> which has remained unknown to research.<sup>4</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 1a ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 620 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 105a - 107a.

<sup>4</sup> BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, p. 282 does not include this codex among the cycle of the collections of the *tūrgāmē* by Mōšē bar Kēphā.

contains a corpus<sup>1</sup> which includes the *tūrgāmē*, *‘elātā* and *mēmre* and also some *pūšāqē*. According to the colophon, the manuscript was completed on the 15th of Tāmmūz 1529,<sup>2</sup> i.e. July 15, 1218 A.D. This corpus has also included this segment of the commentary. Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 21, 210<sup>3</sup> is a collection of the biblical and liturgical writings of Mōšē. This volume is written on Oriental paper. It was completed in 1553 A. Gr., i.e. 1241/2 A.D.<sup>4</sup> Ms. Paris Syr. 207<sup>5</sup> is much younger, written in the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these manuscripts several other witnesses have emerged. Ms. Harv. Har. 29<sup>7</sup> is a codex which was copied in the year 1809/10 A.D., a codex which has remained unknown to scholars.<sup>8</sup> Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/11<sup>9</sup> is a codex which is still younger.<sup>10</sup> According to a subscription its transcript was completed in the year 1911 A.D. but for this an ancient manuscript in Ṭūr ‘Abdīn was used. A very interesting exponent appears in Ms. Mardin Orth. A.<sup>11</sup> It is a manuscript without a signature, a volume bound in yellow leather.<sup>12</sup> It is a huge corpus of *tūrgāmē*, *mēmre*, *‘elātā* and *pūšāqē*. This corpus is the fullest, including texts which cannot be found in other similar collections known to us. The volume, written in two columns, was copied in the year 1956 A.D. The transcript was made from a codex copied by Menḥā, a monk of the village of Ḥaṣḥas. Here also this particular segment has been included.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT - A. COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in Cambridge* II (Cambridge 1901), p. 800 ff.

<sup>2</sup> In the index Wright and Cook mark this manuscript as in Karšūnī, but by mistake.

<sup>3</sup> For. 63a - 65a.

<sup>4</sup> WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 876 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Fol. 98b - 100b.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. H. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaïtes) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris 1874), p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> Fol. 214b - 216a.

<sup>8</sup> There is a very brief reference to this manuscript in J. T. CLEMONS, "Checklist of the Syriac Manuscripts in the United States and Canada," in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* XXXI (1965), p. 238.

<sup>9</sup> The codex belongs to the collection of manuscripts of the patriarchate of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Damascus.

<sup>10</sup> Nr. 21 in the collection.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā*.

<sup>12</sup> Its measures are 34,5 × 25,5 cm.

<sup>13</sup> Nr. 21 in the collection.



There is still another segment of the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, namely, from the apocalyptic section regarding the Antichrist, Matthew XXIV, 23ff. It is expressly stated that this writing is based on the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. The oldest witness to this text comes from Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918,<sup>1</sup> completed, as we have already seen, in the year 1218 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Ms. Paris Syr. 207<sup>3</sup> stems from the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Ms. Paris Syr. 206<sup>5</sup> is a little younger,<sup>6</sup> written about 1552/5 A.D.<sup>7</sup> To these texts we are able to add three more. The oldest appears in Ms. Šarf. 4/2,<sup>8</sup> copied in the month of Ḥazirān 1775 A. Gr.,<sup>9</sup> i.e., in June 1464 A.D. Ms. Harv. Har. 29<sup>10</sup> was copied in the year 1809/10 A.D. Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/12<sup>11</sup> was copied in the year 1911 A.D., but it rests on an ancient manuscript in Ṭūr ‘Abdīn.

## 2. THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

There are three segments taken from the commentary on the Gospel of Luke. The first is the episode concerning the visit of Mary to Elizabeth in Luke I, 39ff. The earliest witness to this text appears in Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918,<sup>12</sup> written in 1218 A.D.<sup>13</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 21, 210<sup>14</sup> is of the year 1241/2 A.D.<sup>15</sup> Ms. Paris Syr. 207<sup>16</sup> is of the fifteenth century<sup>17</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 240a - 248a.

<sup>2</sup> WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 805.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 231b - 242a.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, p. 159 f.

<sup>5</sup> Fol. 120a - 126b.

<sup>6</sup> About this manuscript, see H. BÉGUIN, "Un recueil d'homélies du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle en langue syriaque," in: *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* XXII-XXIII (1920-23), p. 363 ff., 82 ff.

<sup>7</sup> ZOTENBERG, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Fol. 264b - 269b.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. I. ARMALET, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet* (Jounieh 1936), p. 76 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Fol. 221b - 226a.

<sup>11</sup> Page 369 - 383.

<sup>12</sup> Fol. 19b - 21b.

<sup>13</sup> WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 800.

<sup>14</sup> Fol. 9a - 10a.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 877.

<sup>16</sup> Fol. 34a - 36a.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, p. 159 f.

Ms. Paris Syr. 206,<sup>1</sup> was written about 1552/5 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Five more witnesses can be added to this group. The oldest is Ms. Harv. Har. 29,<sup>3</sup> written in 1809/10 A.D. Others are: Ms. Birm. Ming. Syr. 112,<sup>4</sup> copied in the year 1905 A.D.,<sup>5</sup> Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/10<sup>6</sup> and Ms. 4/11,<sup>7</sup> and Ms. Mardin Orth. A.<sup>8</sup>

The second segment concerns the episode with the son of the widow in Luke VII, 11ff. Also here the oldest evidence has been preserved to us by Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918,<sup>9</sup> copied in 1218 A.D.<sup>10</sup> This text is represented by Ms. Paris Syr. 207<sup>11</sup> and Ms. 206,<sup>12</sup> to which Ms. Šarf. 4/2<sup>13</sup> must be added. According to the colophon the last manuscript was written in the month of Ḥazirān 1775 A. Gr., i.e., in June 1464 A.D.<sup>14</sup>

The third segment represents the episode with the Samaritan in Luke X, 39ff. Here, too, the oldest available record has been preserved to us by Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918,<sup>15</sup> copied in the year 1218 A.D.<sup>16</sup> Its text has been preserved in Ms. Paris Syr. 207<sup>17</sup> and Ms. 206.<sup>18</sup> To these Ms. Šarf. 4/2<sup>19</sup> must be added. This codex represents the second earliest witness to this text. It is dated and according to its colophon it was copied in the year 1464 A.D.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 16b - 18b.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 26b - 27b.

<sup>4</sup> Fol. 9b - 10b.

<sup>5</sup> A. MINGANA, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts I* (Cambridge 1933), col. 271 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Section nr. 5 in the corpus.

<sup>7</sup> Section nr. 3 in the corpus.

<sup>8</sup> Section nr. 3 in the corpus.

<sup>9</sup> Fol. 107a - 108b.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts II*, p. 803.

<sup>11</sup> Fol. 100b - 101b. Cf. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, p. 159 f.

<sup>12</sup> Fol. 64b - 65b; *ibid.*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Fol. 131b - 133a.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. ARMALET, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 76 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Fol. 108b - 115a.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts II*, p. 803.

<sup>17</sup> Fol. 101b - 106b; cf. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, p. 159 f.

<sup>18</sup> Fol. 65b-69b; cf. *ibid.*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Fol. 133a-138a.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. ARMALET, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*, p. 76 ff.



## 3. THE COMMENTARY ON THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Since the commentary on the Fourth Gospel has survived only in one single manuscript, namely in Ms. Cambr. Add. 1971,<sup>1</sup> written in the year 1507 A. Gr.,<sup>2</sup> i.e., 1196 A.D., every new piece of evidence is particularly welcome. There are two segments which have come down to us from this commentary in a separate tradition.

The first has to do with the introduction to the commentary. The earliest witness to this text is found in Ms. Harv. Har. 29,<sup>3</sup> copied in the year 1809/10 A.D. It contains only the introduction.<sup>4</sup> Other witnesses to this text are: Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/10<sup>5</sup> and Ms. 4/12.<sup>6</sup> Here a new document must be introduced which appears in this treatment for the first time, Ms. Mardin Orth. 216,<sup>7</sup> a record which was copied in the year 1912 A.D.<sup>8</sup>

The second segment concerns the text in John XX, 17. Here we have to do with a very rare phenomenon. It shows itself in Ms. Cambr. Add. 2918,<sup>9</sup> which was completed in the year 1218 A.D.,<sup>10</sup> where it is introduced under the title, "Exposition of the word of our Lord: I go to my Father and your Father." Up to now only one single additional witness to this text could be unearthed, namely Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/12.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the ancient archetype which Jōḥannān Dōlabāni found in Ṭūr 'Abdīn must have been a very precious document.

## 4. THE COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

Finally a section must be introduced which is derived from the commentary on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. This is a section

<sup>1</sup> Fol. 1b-310b.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts*, I, p. 47ff.

<sup>3</sup> Fol. 3b-9b.

<sup>4</sup> CLEMONS, *Checklist*, p. 238, referring to the contents of this manuscript by "including John," is misleading.

<sup>5</sup> Section nr. 1 in the corpus.

<sup>6</sup> Section nr. 9 in the corpus.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Syriac Manuscripts from the Treasury of the Monastery of Mār Ḥanānyā*.

<sup>8</sup> Section nr. 4 in the corpus.

<sup>9</sup> Fol. 190a-196a.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts* II, p. 804.

<sup>11</sup> Section nr. 9 in the corpus.



in which Paul wrestles with the idea of the Antichrist in order to clarify the confusion among the Thessalonians, namely II Thess. II, 1ff. This section appears in the treatise on Antichrist.<sup>1</sup> It is stated expressly that this writing is partly<sup>2</sup> based on this particular commentary. As a result of our search we now have a number of sources<sup>3</sup> for this particular treatise of Mōšē. Chronologically the earliest witness to this text appears in Ms. Šarf. 4/2,<sup>4</sup> copied in the year 1464 A.D.<sup>5</sup> Ms. Harv. Har. 29<sup>6</sup> was copied in the year 1809/10 A.D. A very precious source appears in Ms. Dam. Patr. 4/12<sup>7</sup> which rests on an ancient archetype which was found in Ṭūr ‘Abdīn.

With regard to this commentary we are very fortunate that it has been preserved. Ms. Oxf. Marsh 86,<sup>8</sup> which is an ancient codex,<sup>9</sup> has preserved its text,<sup>10</sup> and also Ms. Oxf. Bodl. Orient. 703<sup>11</sup> which is of the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See page 29.

<sup>2</sup> This is stated in the text of the treatise.

<sup>3</sup> About other manuscripts, see page 29.

<sup>4</sup> Fol. 264b-269b.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ARMALET, *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charjet*, p. 76 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Fol. 221b-226a.

<sup>7</sup> Section nr. 17 in the corpus.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. SMITH, *Catalogus codicum syriacorum*, col. 418 ff.

<sup>9</sup> “Vetustus”, *ibid.*, col. 418.

<sup>10</sup> Fol. 63 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. SMITH, *Catalogus codicum syriacorum*, col. 400 ff.

<sup>12</sup> P. 49 ff.

## INDEX OF QUOTED MANUSCRIPTS

### BIRMINGHAM

Mingana Syr. 65 11  
Mingana Syr. 112 11, 30

### CAMBRIDGE

Add. 1971 31  
Add. 2918 11, 27, 29ff.

### CAMBRIDGE(MASS.)

Harvard Har. 29 11, 28ff., 31f.,  
34

### DAMASCUS

Patr. Orth. 4/2 11  
Patr. Orth. 4/10 30f.  
Patr. Orth. 4/11 28, 30, 34  
Patr. Orth. 4/12 11, 29, 31f., 34

### JERUSALEM

Mark. 153 34

### LONDON

Br. Mus. Add. 17, 188 27  
Br. Mus. Add. 17, 274 15, 19  
Br. Mus. Add. 21, 210 11, 28f.,  
34  
Br. Mus. Orient. 1017 11

### MARDIN

Mard. Orth. 101 15ff.  
Mard. Orth. 102 19ff.  
Mard. Orth. 121 23f., 25f.  
Mard. Orth. 216 31

Mard. Orth. 259 11  
Mard. Orth. 368 11  
Mard. Orth. A 11, 28, 30, 34  
Mard. Orth. E 11

### MĀR BEHNĀM

Mār Behn. 9 11

### MĀR MATTAI

Mār Matt. 193 11

### MIDYAT

Gülçe 4 33

### MOSUL

Mos. Orth. 187 11

### OXFORD

Bodl. Marsh 86 24, 26, 32  
Bodl. Orient. 703 24, 26, 32

### PARIS

Par. Syr. 206 29f.  
Par. Syr. 207 28ff.

### ŠARFEH

Šarfeh 4/2 11, 30, 32, 34

### VATICAN

Vat. Arab. 453 15  
Vat. Syr. 37 11

### ZA'FARĀN

Deir Za'f. 2/17 11

CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . .	9
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	11
I. THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW	15
1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 101 . . . . .	15
2. ITS EVIDENCE . . . . .	17
II. THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE . .	19
1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 102 . . . . .	19
2. ITS EVIDENCE . . . . .	21
III. THE COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TI- MOTHY . . . . .	23
1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 121 . . . . .	23
2. ITS EVIDENCE . . . . .	24
IV. THE COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY . . . . .	25
1. MS. MARDIN ORTH. 121 . . . . .	25
2. ITS EVIDENCE . . . . .	25
V. SEGMENTS OF COMMENTARIES ALREADY EXTANT .	27
1. THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW . .	27
2. THE COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE . .	29
3. THE COMMENTARY ON THE FOURTH GOSPEL . . .	31
4. THE COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS . . . . .	31
VI. SEGMENTS FROM COMMENTARIES WHICH ARE LOST . . . . .	33
1. THE BOOK OF ACTS . . . . .	33
2. NEW EVIDENCE . . . . .	34
INDEX OF QUOTED MANUSCRIPTS . . . . .	35





